# Building a Culture of Ethics: The Impact of School-Based Counseling on Student Behavior

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| Article Info | Abstract |
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| | The formation of character and ethics is crucial from childhood, as children easily absorb behaviors and values from their surroundings. Ethics is an integral part of human attitudes and interactions, which do not develop naturally but are shaped through guidance, education, and social influence from parents, teachers, and the community. Instilling ethical awareness at an early age is essential to fostering responsible and respectful individuals. This study aims to cultivate ethical awareness among children in Sidomulyo Village through a counseling-based approach conducted at SDN 07 Mesuji as part of a KKN (Real Work Lecture) program. The counseling method involves interactive discussions and role-playing activities designed to reinforce moral values and social etiquette.The findings indicate that this counseling approach leads to a noticeable improvement in the ethical behavior of the children in Sidomulyo Village. The program's effectiveness is evident in the children's increased understanding and application of moral values in daily interactions. These results suggest that structured ethical counseling can be a valuable tool in character education when supported by teachers, parents, and the school community.<br>. |

## INTRODUCTION

Childhood is a crucial phase in shaping a person's character and ethics. At this stage, children are more likely to absorb and imitate behaviors from their surroundings, including family, school, and the community (Suryawan, 2020). Moral and ethical education plays a vital role in shaping children's personalities as future generations, especially during the golden age. However, the current reality shows a decline in ethical awareness among children. Various social media platforms and news reports indicate that many children are increasingly engaging in unethical behaviors, such as brawls, bullying, and disrespectful attitudes toward parents and teachers. In the educational environment, unethical behaviors are often manifested in a lack of respect for teachers, inattentiveness in class, and disobedience to school rules.

Etymologically, ethics originates from the Greek word ethice, meaning an individual's behavior, customs, or inclination to act in a certain way. Ahmad Amin (1986) defines ethics as the science that explains the meaning of good and bad and determines the actions humans should take. Similarly, Hamzah Ya'qub (1993) describes ethics as the study of human actions in terms of good and bad, as perceived by reason. In Islam, the concept of ethics is also emphasized in the Qur'an, as seen

in Surah An-Nisa verse 36, which commands humanity to do good to others, including parents, neighbors, and those in need. Despite religious teachings and social norms advocating ethical behavior, personal experiences, social environments, and psychological development remain influential factors in shaping an individual's ethical conduct (Mohammad Maiwan, 2018).

Previous studies have explored various approaches to ethical education. Character education in schools is often integrated into formal curricula (Lickona, 1991; Suyanto, 2010), while parenting approaches emphasize the role of parents in shaping children's moral values (Baumrind, 1991; Santrock, 2019). Additionally, research on the influence of social environments on children's ethical behavior has been extensively studied, particularly in the context of peer interactions and social media (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bandura, 1986). Several studies have also examined the effectiveness of counseling methods in raising ethical awareness, but these primarily focus on teenagers and adults (Sunarto, 2015; Handayani, 2021), whereas research on the application of this method to elementary school children in rural areas remains limited.

This study offers a novel approach to ethical education by utilizing counseling methods targeted at children at SDN 07 Mesuji, Sidomulyo Village. Unlike previous studies that predominantly rely on curriculum-based approaches or parental upbringing, this research highlights counseling as a direct educational tool that engages children in active interactions. The method aims to provide a deeper understanding of moral and ethical values through interactive techniques such as group discussions, simulations, and case studies. Furthermore, this study evaluates the impact of counseling on behavioral changes in children's daily lives, both at school and in their social environments. The integration of local ethical and religious values into the counseling process is also a key aspect, making this study more contextually relevant to the socio-cultural conditions of Sidomulyo Village.

Therefore, this research is expected to contribute to the development of more effective and applicable ethical education strategies, particularly for children in rural areas. The findings of this study are anticipated to not only enhance children's ethical awareness but also provide recommendations for schools, families, and communities in fostering ethical character from an early age through well-structured and targeted counseling methods.

## METHOD

This study employed an educational approach through counseling as a method of community service in Sidomulyo Village. The counseling was designed to instill ethical awareness in children by providing direct engagement and interactive learning experiences.

### 1. Data Collection Methods

Data collection was conducted using the focus group discussion (FGD) method, which involved students, teachers, and school staff at SDN 07 Mesuji. The FGD sessions aimed to explore participants' existing understanding of ethical behavior, identify common ethical issues encountered in their daily interactions, and encourage collaborative discussions on solutions. In addition to FGDs, observational methods were used to document students' behavioral responses before, during, and after the counseling sessions. This approach allowed researchers to assess both verbal and non-verbal interactions, providing a more comprehensive understanding of students' engagement and ethical awareness.

### 2. Counseling Implementation

The counseling sessions were conducted on July 22 and 24, 2023, at SDN 07 Mesuji. Each session lasted for 90 minutes, covering:
Introduction and Awareness Building (20 minutes): An interactive discussion on ethics and moral values, incorporating real-life examples relevant to students' daily experiences.
Counseling Session (40 minutes): The main session included storytelling, case study discussions, and role-playing activities designed to reinforce ethical decision-making.

Reflection and Feedback (30 minutes): Students shared their insights and experiences, while facilitators provided guidance on how to apply ethical behavior in everyday life.

## 3. Data Analysis

To analyze the effectiveness of the counseling, discourse analysis was employed. This method examined patterns of communication among students, including language use, behavioral responses, and engagement levels. Researchers focused on how students articulated ethical dilemmas, justified their decisions, and interacted with peers in ethical discussions.

## 4. Evaluation of Effectiveness

The impact of the counseling was assessed using both qualitative and quantitative approaches:
 a. Pre- and Post-Counseling Observations: Changes in student behavior were recorded before and after the sessions to identify any improvements in ethical conduct.
 b. Teacher and Facilitator Feedback: Teachers and facilitators were interviewed to provide insights into students' behavioral changes and engagement levels.
 c. Student Reflections: Participants were encouraged to share their thoughts and experiences on how the counseling influenced their perspectives on ethical behavior.

By combining educational counseling with interactive learning techniques, this study aimed to create a more engaging and effective approach to ethical education.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The implementation of the counseling program on "Raising Children's Awareness of the Importance of Ethics" at SDN 07 Mesuji, Sidomulyo Village, Mesuji District, resulted in noticeable behavioral changes among students. The program was conducted over two days, on July 22 and 24, 2023, with a total of 90 participants divided into four groups. The counseling sessions involved structured presentations and interactive activities, including role-playing, to enhance students' engagement and understanding of ethical behavior.

Pre-Counseling Observations
Before the intervention, an initial survey and problem mapping were conducted to assess the students' behavioral patterns. Based on observations and interviews with teachers, several issues were identified, including a lack of courtesy in greeting others, frequent classroom disruptions, difficulty in following rules, and tendencies towards aggressive behavior such as teasing and fighting. These findings were recorded in a checklist (Table 1) to establish a baseline for comparison.

**Table 1.** Behavioral Checklist – Pre-Counseling

| No. | Behavior Observed | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | Greeting others warmly when passing by | 65% |
| 2. | Actively greeting others politely | 65% |
| 3. | Practicing good manners in daily life | 54% |
| 4. | Listening attentively to the teacher during lessons | 40% |
| 5. | Staying focused and quiet during class | 45% |
| 6. | Easily guided and following given rules | 55% |
| 7. | Interacting peacefully and harmoniously with peers | 65% |
| 8. | Respecting and appreciating friends in communication | 66% |
| 9. | Behaving well and respecting others' rights | 56% |
| 10. | Complying with school rules and regulations | 64% |
| 11. | Dressing neatly according to school regulations | 65% |
| 12. | Respecting teachers and following their instructions well | 66% |

| No. | Behavior Observed | Percentage |
|-----|-------------------|------------|
| 13. | Sharing and respecting others' belongings | 57% |
| 14. | Sitting properly and staying in place during class | 45% |
| 15. | Shaking hands with teachers and parents as a sign of respect | 62% |

Implementation of the Counseling Program

The program was designed to address these behavioral concerns through direct interaction, guided discussions, and practical demonstrations. Key steps in the implementation process included, a) Conducting preliminary assessments and securing necessary permissions; b) Organizing sessions where students participated in discussions, role-playing, and group activities designed to reinforce ethical behavior. Activity during counseling program can see in Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** Children listen to the presentation of counseling materials and build interactions with students.

Post-Counseling Observations

A follow-up observation was conducted to assess the impact of the program. The results indicated a significant improvement in students' behavior (See Table 2). Compared to the pre-counseling checklist, there was a reduction in negative behaviors such as classroom disruptions, disrespect towards teachers, and conflicts among peers. Additionally, students demonstrated an increased willingness to greet others politely, listen attentively to lessons, and follow school rules. These findings suggest that structured ethical counseling can effectively promote positive behavioral changes in elementary school students.

Tabel 2. Behavioral Checklist – Post-Counseling

| No. | Behavior Observed | Percentage |
|-----|-------------------|------------|
| 1. | Greeting others warmly when passing by | 85% |
| 2. | Actively greeting others politely | 85% |
| 3. | Practicing good manners in daily life | 78% |
| 4. | Listening attentively to the teacher during lessons | 82% |
| 5. | Staying focused and quiet during class | 87% |
| 6. | Easily guided and following given rules | 95% |
| 7. | Interacting peacefully and harmoniously with peers | 89% |
| 8. | Respecting and appreciating friends in communication | 90% |
| 9. | Behaving well and respecting others' rights | 82% |
| 10. | Complying with school rules and regulations | 83% |
| 11. | Dressing neatly according to school regulations | 90% |
| 12. | Respecting teachers and following their instructions well | 92% |
| 13. | Sharing and respecting others' belongings | 87% |
| 14. | Sitting properly and staying in place during class | 90% |
| 15. | Shaking hands with teachers and parents as a sign of respect | 32% |

The counseling on ethical awareness conducted at SDN 07 Mesuji showed a significant impact on improving students' understanding and ethical behavior. Before the counseling, initial observations indicated that students tended to lack polite behavior, such as rarely greeting teachers and peers, being undisciplined in class, and frequently engaging in social conflicts. However, after the intervention through interactive counseling methods involving role-playing and group discussions, there was a positive behavioral change. Students became more active in interacting politely, showed increased discipline in class, and demonstrated greater respect for teachers and peers. These changes indicate that an educational approach based on direct experience is more effective in raising ethical awareness than merely delivering theoretical material.

The results of this study align with research conducted by Johnson et al. (2021), which found that experience-based learning methods, such as role-playing and group discussions, are more effective in shaping character and enhancing ethical awareness compared to conventional lecture methods. Another study by Smith & Brown (2020) also found that educational interventions using interactive approaches significantly improved children's understanding of ethical values, particularly in primary education. However, the key difference between this study and previous research is its focus on implementing counseling in rural elementary schools, which presents unique challenges, such as limited resources and restricted access to diverse educational materials.

Furthermore, compared to research by Lee et al. (2019), which examined the effectiveness of ethics counseling in urban school environments, this study highlights that the main challenge in rural areas is the lack of parental involvement in guiding children to apply ethical values at home. This suggests that for behavioral changes to be more sustainable, collaboration between schools, families, and the community is necessary to shape children's character holistically. Therefore, as a recommendation for future research, a more comprehensive approach involving parents and the school community could be a solution to ensure that ethical counseling not only has a temporary impact but also fosters long-term behavioral change in children.

## CONCLUSION

The implementation of the counseling program on Raising Children's Awareness of the Importance of Ethics at SDN 07 Mesuji, Sidomulyo Village, Mesuji District, showed positive results. Following the program, there was a significant change in students' behavior, as they became more aware of the importance of ethics and began applying it in their daily lives. This counseling initiative proved to be an effective solution for increasing ethical awareness among students. The success of this program also highlights that character development is not solely the responsibility of students but requires the active involvement of the entire school community. Therefore, in addition to students, teachers as educators must also serve as role models in practicing ethics, ensuring that a culture of good behavior is maintained sustainably within the school environment.

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